

My Home on the Lakes

The best time to see New York's Finger Lakes is all year round.

By **Jeremey Henries**, Penn Yan, New York

I live in a small town called Penn Yan (short for Pennsylvania Yankee) on the northern tip of Keuka Lake in the Finger Lakes region of New York. My hometown is a place many call their second home. I am proud I get to live here all year long.

Even when faced with 10 inches of fresh snow on the ground and a wind chill of 15 below, I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. The crisp air and the glitter of the snow at night are as amazing to me as seeing these mighty lakes freeze over. Also, without the cold white stuff, our local ice fishermen on Keuka Lake wouldn't have any

tall fish tales with which to entertain one another.

In the spring, I see farmers in their fields plowing and planting the seeds of their next harvest. In the summer, the tourists are all smiles as they try new foods or see the beauty of our area for the first time. (I also don't mind the delicious aroma of barbecued chicken during cookout season.) In the fall, the leaves on the trees change color, setting off another seasonal spectacle.

We often joke around here that New York City has its skyscrapers and we have ours, too: We call them silos. When you look across our rolling hills, you see farm fields

“In fall, leaves on the trees change color,

that are green in the summer and turn to gold in the fall.

There are many farmers markets all over our area. A farm and craft market called the Windmill attracts thousands of visitors every year; they say it's the friendliest in upstate New York. But if you can't make it to the Windmill, don't worry. Hundreds of produce stands are scattered along our beautiful country roads. It's hard to resist stopping at all of them.

You'll also pass Mennonites driving horses and buggies; sometimes you'll see them riding bikes. The Mennonites came to Yates County in the 1970s in search of affordable farmland. Some drive tractors without rubber on the wheels. I once asked why, and the answer was: "If we don't put the stop somewhere, we will lose our values."

Another thing you'll notice as you drive around our area is the beauty of the Finger Lakes themselves. Two are especially close to my heart.

Keuka Lake, shaped like a Y, is 20 miles long and can

be as deep as 187 feet in some spots. Penn Yan sits at the northern tip. At the southern tip is Hammondsport, where Glenn Curtiss had his shop. Glenn was in competition with the famous Wright brothers and conducted many test flights in Hammondsport.

Seneca is the deepest of the Finger Lakes, almost 630 feet in some places. The lake rarely freezes because it is so deep. At the southern end of Seneca Lake is Watkins Glen, which is known for Watkins Glen State Park and the NASCAR track Watkins Glen International.

The mild climate around the lake makes this region ideal for growing grapes, and there are vineyards throughout the Finger Lakes. We like to refer to our area as the Napa Valley of the East. It has grown to be a world-renowned destination for wine consumers.

But what I love most of all about my home is the people who live here. If you ever make your way to the Finger Lakes, you just might want to call it home, too. 🌳

setting off another seasonal spectacle."

Oranges, reds,
yellows and greens
surround the shores
of Keuka Lake.